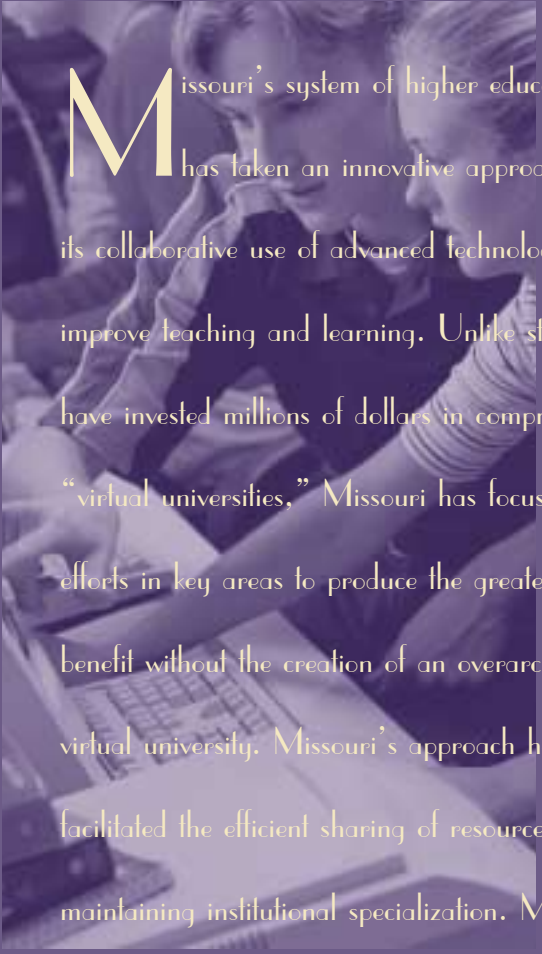
Logged on to Learning

Taking Education to Missouri Students



Missouri's system of higher education has taken an innovative approach in its collaborative use of advanced technologies to improve teaching and learning. Unlike states that have invested millions of dollars in comprehensive "virtual universities," Missouri has focused its efforts in key areas to produce the greatest benefit without the creation of an overarching virtual university. Missouri's approach has facilitated the efficient sharing of resources while maintaining institutional specialization. Missouri colleges and universities are becoming more accessible to learners involved in traditional on-campus education as well as those participating through distance learning technologies. The technology initiatives described here represent an integrated, comprehensive plan to provide access to high-quality learning opportunities through innovative technologies.

MOREnet

The Missouri Research and Education Network

MOREnet provides Internet connections as well as network and security services, training and seminars, online reference resources, and video distance learning capabilities. MOREnet consumers include K-12 schools, colleges and universities, community networks, public libraries, and government agencies – all of which enjoy a dedicated Internet connection and around-the-clock technical assistance.

Higher education members of MOREnet, known as the Missouri Education and Research Consortium (MERC), include 26 public and 30 independent institutions. MERC's purpose is to advance the collaborative use of networked technology and applications in higher education, research, and public service and the sharing of resources for all members' benefit. MERC strives to be recognized nationally as the model of collaboration for networked technology and networking in higher education.

MOREnet's FY 2001 appropriation through the Coordinating Board for Higher Education totaled $12.1 million. MOREnet is requesting a $3.5 million increase for FY 2002, for a total appropriation of $15,577,520. Through collaboration with and funding through the Secretary of State, the Office of Administration, and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as well as additional funding from customer fees, MOREnet's contributions toward high-quality, efficient access and services to Missouri's entire education community are significant.

The requested increase for FY 2002 seeks additional funding for

- increased bandwidth for the MOREnet backbone
- increased access to the Internet
- access to advanced research networks (including next-generation Internet 2)
- increased bandwidth to public higher education institutions that demonstrate need for additional capacity
- connections for distance learning centers
- integration between older two-way video technologies and the more efficient Internet-based video technologies

The results of these initiatives mean higher quality and greater access to educational resources for Missouri learners as well as greater efficiency for and collaboration between Missouri colleges and universities.

www.more.net

MISSOURI Learners' Network

Missouri's colleges and universities are making progress in developing online courses and programs. Unfortunately, many Missourians remain unaware of the diverse educational opportunities that exist. Unlike traditional on-campus courses and programs that serve a given geographic region, their technology-based counterparts generally are not subject to geographic limitations. Currently, there is no easily searchable, comprehensive source of technology-based courses and programs. The Missouri Learners' Network will provide learners such a source. Anyone with Internet access will be able to search Missouri's technology-based educational opportunities using the academic subject, keyword, degree level, institution, term, or delivery format.

The Missouri Learners' Network has an incredibly high level of support; all public two- and four-year colleges and universities, along with the majority of independent institutions and several proprietary schools, have committed to participate in the network. The Missouri National Guard also has structured future training and educational programs around the core services provided by the Missouri Learners' Network and has identified the network as an essential component in meeting the educational needs of National Guard personnel. Finally, with its powerful database capabilities, the network also will play a central role in the community colleges' collaborative efforts to make an associate of arts degree available completely online.

The Missouri Learners' Network is scheduled to be operational in January 2001. Funding to sustain the network will result in a more efficient use of resources by providing a single source of information that helps place- and time-bound learners discover how Missouri's higher education system can meet their needs. The network's database and web site were created through temporary funding; its budget request for FY 2002 totals approximately $460,000 and will provide for database and web site development and maintenance, marketing, and training for college and university personnel.

On-Campus Technology Infrastructure

Missouri's public colleges and universities face a growing challenge as outdated on-campus technology infrastructures fall behind minimum standards for effective teaching and learning. Compounding this problem are the diverse local efforts to improve teaching and learning through innovative, technology-intensive initiatives.

Missouri's public two- and four-year colleges and universities have collaborated to develop a utility, or life-cycle, funding model that will support the development, maintenance, and replacement of instructional technology in educational facilities. Currently, each public institution attempts to maintain its own instructional technology infrastructure; however, the cost and frequency of updating these infrastructures surpasses the institutions' abilities to meet basic needs.

The long-term approach of the life-cycle funding model identifies agreed-upon technology standards and funding mechanisms and will help improve the effectiveness of technology in classrooms, laboratories, learning centers, and faculty offices. Key to this proposal is a four-year funding plan for equipment and network infrastructure as well as a three-year life-cycle plan that ensures the replacement of outdated equipment. This proposal recommends a phase-in over four years of $3.25 million each year for the two-year institutions ($13 million) and $5.5 million each year for the four-year institutions ($22 million).

A life-cycle funding model for campus-level technology will ensure that MOREnet, MOBIUS, the Missouri Learners' Network, technical education, and other statewide technology initiatives can continue to be used effectively to support learning. Such a model is vital for Missouri's public institutions to educate students and train a technology-competent workforce for an ever-changing global economy.

MOBIUS

Linking Missouri's Academic Libraries

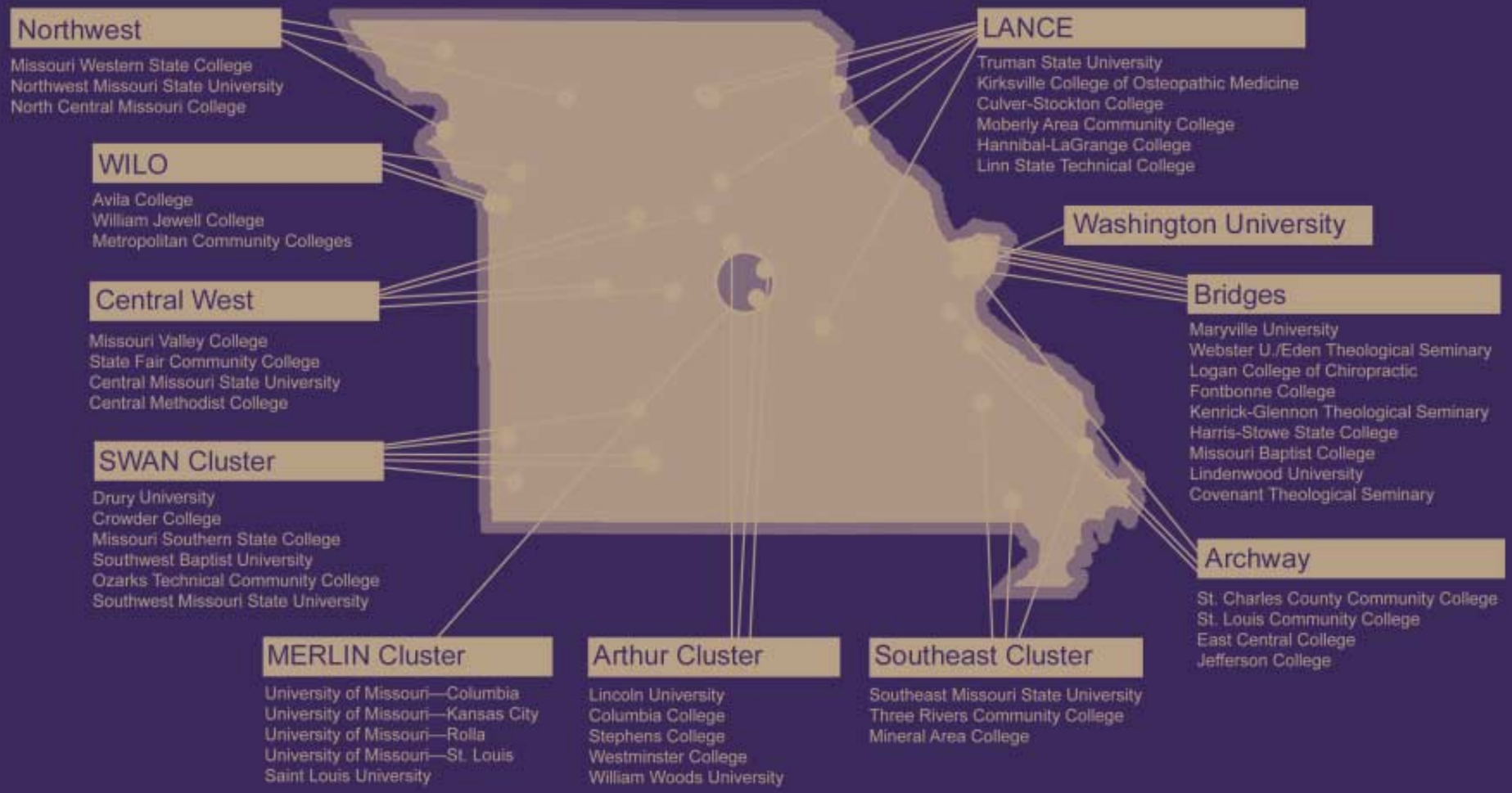
MOBIUS, the Missouri Bibliographic Information User System, is a consortium of 50 postsecondary academic libraries within the state. In January 2000, the Coordinating Board for Higher Education introduced a common library platform for the public and independent, two- and four-year institutions. The platform provides a "virtual collection" of the 14 million items in Missouri college and university libraries. The common library platform allows faculty and students to request materials from any MOBIUS library. This collaboration marks another step toward increased accessibility and improved quality of postsecondary education for all learners.

Twenty-one academic libraries have converted their individual card catalogs to the MOBIUS catalog. The remaining institutions are scheduled to be phased in by mid-2002. In the meantime, patrons of all participating libraries are able to borrow materials from the libraries that already are integrated into the MOBIUS catalog. All MOBIUS libraries enjoy the benefits of a statewide materials delivery system, through which borrowers receive requested library materials within 24 to 48 hours.

MOBIUS was made possible through the Missouri General Assembly and Governor Mel Carnahan's approval of $10.2 million over three years to cover start-up costs. As outlined in the original funding plan, MOBIUS will continue to request one-half of the consortium's operating costs from the state, with consortium members paying the remainder of the costs. The FY 2002 MOBIUS request of $2.4 million includes a state funding share for new projects, including the licensing of electronic databases. Participating libraries also will share in the cost of this new effort to improve the accessibility, quality, and efficiency of Missouri's academic libraries.

mobius.missouri.edu

- As of October 2000, the MOBIUS catalog contained 3.5 million titles representing 9.4 million volumes.
- Of the 3.5 million titles currently held in the MOBIUS catalog, 74 percent are uniquely held and are, therefore, unduplicated at other MOBIUS institutions.
- With 15 of the 50 MOBIUS libraries fully online, approximately 20,000 volumes already had circulated through the MOBIUS system as of October 2000.
- Combining MOBIUS borrowing with the lending of other inter-library activities, approximately 30,000 volumes have traversed the MOBIUS materials delivery system so far.



The Distributed Learning Workshop is a project sponsored by the Midwestern Higher Education Commission, a 10-state consortium to which Missouri belongs. Through campus-level collaboration, participating institutions help create technology-rich, multimedia course modules that are shared among all participating institutions. Several possible configurations of how Missouri can participate exist. (Illinois, Ohio, California, and Florida already have joined through state contracts; many individual institutions also have joined.) Because the Distributed Learning Workshop continues to evolve as more states and higher education institutions join the initiative, this request enables the Coordinating Board for Higher Education to contract for instructional materials and provides campus grants to those Missouri colleges and universities choosing to participate.

For more information, contact:
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